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ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6348

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State of Washington

60th Legislature

2008 Regular Session

By Senate Water, Energy & Telecommunications (originally sponsored by Senator Morton)

READ FIRST TIME 02/07/08.

1 AN ACT Relating to the interwatershed transfer of water rights; and  
2 creating new sections.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that interwatershed  
5 water rights transfers pose a threat to the economic and social welfare  
6 of rural communities. Because it is increasingly difficult for water  
7 users to acquire new water rights, transfers are indeed a valuable and  
8 necessary water management tool. However, the permanent transfer of  
9 water rights away from Washington's rural communities has serious  
10 economic and social impacts. Although a rural water rights holder  
11 receives compensation for transferring water rights outside of a  
12 watershed, third parties such as laborers and supporting businesses  
13 suffer. The loss of water rights also reduces land use options and  
14 property values, resulting in a shrinking revenue base for rural local  
15 governments. Finally, the loss of water rights can permanently change  
16 the character of agricultural land and the surrounding rural community.  
17 Therefore, the legislature intends to protect rural communities from  
18 the permanent and harmful impacts of interwatershed water rights  
19 transfers.

1        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 2.**    The department of ecology must work  
2 diligently with appropriate legislators, stakeholders, representatives  
3 of appropriate tribal interests, and local governments within water  
4 resource inventory areas 43, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59,  
5 60, 61, and 62 to assess the impacts of interwatershed transfers and  
6 existing water sources, including snowpack and potential new water  
7 sources, in order to protect the economic and social welfare of rural  
8 communities. The department of ecology must submit a report, including  
9 detailed legislative and policy recommendations, to the appropriate  
10 committees of the legislature by November 1, 2008.

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